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THE MORALITY OF A CITIZEN;

IN A

VISITATION SERMON;

With a View to the preſent alarming Situation of Public Affairs; the real Grounds of our unhappy Diviſions; and the State of civil and religious Liberty.

Audiet cives acuiſſe ferrum,
Quo graves Perſæ melius perirent:
Audiet pugnas, vitio parentum
Rara juventus.

HOR.

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MDCCLXXVI.

THE

MORALITY

OF

CHILDREN;

A

VISITATION SERMON.

LUKE xi. 17.

EVERY KINGDOM DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF IS BROUGHT TO DESOLATION.

ON occaſions like the preſent, I have ever thought, that the preacher ſhould not confine himſelf to the common rules of the pulpit, and exhort his hearers on ſubjects, which may be as well underſtood, and as familar to the minds of moſt of them, as they can be to himſelf; but if any particular evil infeſts the public peace, and endangers the principles, or morals of the people, to direct the attention of the clergy to that quarter, and animate them to oppoſe it.

As men accountable to God for the uſe of our talents; as the particular ſervants and miniſters of Chriſt; as perſons educated to an honourable and uſeful profeſſion; of ſuppoſed learning, knowledge and wiſdom; and placed in ſituations of importance to the ſtate and the people, we are particularly called upon to be attentive to the public welfare, and to watch with care thoſe cauſes that may affect it. Away with that inſidious cant which would have us converſant only about the other world! Let us do our duty well in this; and every thing that is advantageous in the other, will certainly follow. Detached and ſolitary enthuſiaſts may amuſe themſelves wholly in viſionary contemplations; but thoſe who have entered into ſociety, and have actual offices and appointments in the ſtate, are perfidious and immoral, if they deſert it, even under heavenly pretenſions. A clergyman is the ſervant of the community; and the clergy a diviſion of the government for the benefit of the public: their par-

particular province ſeems to be the education of youth, and the principles and morals of the people. In all public conteſts, their influence has been conſiderable; and, according as they have directed it, have been hurtful, or beneficial, to the world. The policy of late has been to leſſen their weight; and even to render them ridiculous. Government now begins to feel with what conſequences. There were ſome ſpecious reaſons for adopting the preſent method of treating their Convocations. But they were only ſpecious ones. The clergy, no doubt, were reluctant in relinquiſhing their old habits. So had been the crown. And a better, ſounder policy would have been, to have continued and reformed the convocation, in the ſame manner as the prerogative; than to have attempted to render uſeleſs to the ſtate and the public, a large body of people, ſupported at a great expence, and conſiſting of men of learning, abilities, and virtue, at leaſt equal to the reſt of their neighbours.

Several cauſes, beſides that I now hint at, have concurred to leſſen the importance and uſefulneſs of the clergy. Every man, who dreams of a better conſtitution than the preſent, either in church or ſtate, has no doubt a right to propoſe his dream to the publick. This is innocently done in civil matters; and the viſionary is not enraged, if the conſtitution be not torn to pieces to make way for his own project. But in religious dreams the affair is very different. The enthuſiaſt lays down his plan, and every man is to be conſidered as diſhoneſt in this world, and to go to hell in the next, if he does not adopt it. But more of this by-and-by. The influence of the clergy, reduced as it is, muſt yet be very great. Every clergyman, who is equitable, or indulgent to his pariſh in exacting his dues; who does his duty with propriety, and leads a moral life, has ſeveral advantages in point of influence over men in general, of equal income and rank. And, if the common inducements, from the par-

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cular happineſs of your pariſhes were not ſufficient to make you diligent in your duties, I hope, when public evils of the moſt alarming nature are impending, you will ſuffer me to rouze your attention to ſome of their cauſes, which your conduct may in ſome degree counteract.

" A kingdom divided againſt itſelf cannot ſtand." I need not enter into an elaborate diſquiſition to prove the truth of this propoſition.

There is not a truth in nature more ſelf evident. Every *body* is preſerved, by the concurrence of the general principles which belong to it, towards its preſervation. Whatever is introduced into it, which has not that concurrence, is a diſeaſe; and though it may accidentally produce good, is always to be guarded againſt, and conſidered as an evil. All kinds of *diſſents* and *oppoſitions* to the regular operations of a civil conſtitution, are *political diſeaſes*; and though they

may

may, like natural ones, chance to be productive of great good, yet their primary and natural tendency is *to deſtroy the conſtitution*. The regimen may be too ſevere perhaps in both caſes, which might be neceſſary to prevent the diſeaſes themſelves; and there is no cure for them when they have taken place. We can only aſſiſt the conſtitution in bearing its death, and wait its diſſolution with a philoſophical and Chriſtian patience.

I think the glory of our boaſted conſtitution is now tarniſhing; *and that we ſhall not long ſtand, becauſe we are divided againſt ourſelves*. The analogy between the natural and civil conſtitutions holds in many remarkable circumſtances, One of which is the following: that in both of them there is a certain period which is the utmoſt point of growth, ſtrength, and vigor. Before this period, every thing is converted to their advantage, by an internal force, which no diſeaſe can reſiſt.

reſiſt. Beyond it, every little circumſtance is an injury; and they are daily loſing that virtue, which is the only principle of their preſervation. In that ſtate of any ſociety, wherein things are verging to a decline, every art of policy and prudence ſhould be uſed, to prevent thoſe diviſions, which, in an earlier period, might have been beneficial; but in a later one, hurtful, and perhaps fatal.

The right of private judgment, and all the bleſſings of civil and religious libertrty, I hold as ſacred as any man in the world. But I am much miſtaken, if the nature of them has been perfectly underſtood. Civil conſtitutions are not plans of reaſon; and as ſuch, ſubject to the inſpection and amendment of any man who can undertake them. And why are they not? A pert politician will ſay, and he is ready for the undertaking. *They are combinations of cuſtoms, and habits, and laws, and expedients, reduced by neceſſity into ſome kind of form: broken in upon*

by

by accidents; and reſtored again, and ſettled, in tumults and convulſions. The affairs of men have hitherto been incapable of any other management. What is a man to do, who has the fortune to be born in one of theſe communities, and at the ſame time to be born a patriot, or a reformer? The right of private judgment is, no doubt, inviolable. But if he acts according to it, he injures the ſtate, by diſobeying ſome of its laws. Suppoſe ten thouſand ſuch men to be born at the ſame time, *which may happen every day*; it is not poſſible that any two of them can think exactly alike. Every one muſt ſet up for himſelf; and what is worſe, he can reform only himſelf. It is not poſſible he ſhould have an adherent, if he be perfectly honeſt himſelf, and the perſon he would attach to him, be honeſt alſo: *for no two men ever thought alike, on any, but ſimple and mathematical propoſitions*; and perhaps not on them ſo often as is imagined. "Oh, but little differences muſt be given up, to

" form

"form any union." This is the very principle of civil ſociety; without which it cannot be formed or ſubſiſt.

The queſtion is, whether it be a man's duty to obey the laws and cuſtoms of his country, the reaſons of which he may, or may not, underſtand, from a regard to that principle which we have obſerved to be at the foundation of ſociety; or to ſet up his opinion againſt the public, and gratify himſelf at the expence of its peace or ſecurity? Conſcience is out of the queſtion. *No man can go according to his conſcience, in any aſſociation whatever.* Or if his judgment in all its variations (and it muſt vary, if he be honeſt) could be the rule of any party; every other member muſt ſacrifice his integrity to keep his conſcience in union with his principal. The firſt and ſimpleſt union in nature, I mean the conjugal, cannot be formed or preſerved, on the common doctrine of the right of private judgment. Matrimonial factions generally ariſe from miſtak-

ing this doctrine. "What, give up my own "judgment!" a female patriot will ſay, "I will "give up my life ſooner." The bond of union is burſt, and deſolation attends the family. This is the caſe in every ſociety; in proportion as this ſpirit is prevalent. It could not exiſt, if it were general. A rope might as eaſily be made of ſand, as a ſociety be formed of men whom it is impoſſible to unite.

But what is to become of the rights of private judgment, and the honour and honeſty of acting according to it? *They cannot be acted upon in any ſociety that ever exiſted, or perhaps ever will exiſt, in this world.* I ſpeak from knowledge, obſervation, and experience; when I ſay, that I know of no ſituation in any ſociety; no employment, no trade, no profeſſion, in which a man of genuine moral principles, muſt not warp thoſe principles to his convenience, or his peace. If any man, of any buſineſs, ſhould have either the audacity, or inſincerity to deny this, I will ſtake my credit

with

with the world againſt his, and prove it after one hour's attention to his affairs. I look upon it, therefore, as an indiſputable truth, that no man can act in ſociety from his own principles. The ſituation of every man is appointed him by his parents, or by the public, and *another conſcience* is, as it were, ſubſtituted to his own; leſs excellent, (at leaſt in his opinion) but more uſeful. His moral character depends on his fidelity to this conſcience; and his own private opinions and principles are of uſe only in thoſe caſes where his ſocial obligations leave him at liberty.

This may be exclaimed againſt, as opening a door to the moſt ſervile compliances. I am not opening it: it ever was open, and probably ever will be. I can have no objection to a better moral ſyſtem, if it could be had: but it cannot, *and men muſt either fly ſociety, or ſubmit to it.* I have employed in this matter, all the attention and ſagacity I poſſeſs. I have had a long and ſincere

friendſhip with a man, who may be ſaid to have gone through all the *experiments of reformation*, on the principle of honour, and the right of private judgment. He ſtarted firſt from orthodoxy to a conſiderable aſſociation, for reforming the whole church of England. He ſoon found as many objections to the ſociety as to the church itſelf. He tried the Diſſenters; and among them, inſtead of once ſubmitting to the laws againſt his opinion, he was every day to ſubmit to every ſubſcriber in his flock; and was the ſlave of a thouſand abſurd cuſtoms, modes, and opinions. He ſet up for himſelf, and projected *ſchemes of apoſtleſhip*. He began to form aſſociations, and to lay down principles and forms. He found himſelf involved in *conſiderations and expedients*, before he could advance one material ſtep. Every man in his aſſociation was ſingular in his opinion; and no union could have taken place, but by every man making ſome ſacrifice; which was the very objection he had to the eſtabliſhment. In

ſhort,

ſhort, after ruining his fortune, diſtreſſing his friends, and deſtroying his own conſtitution, the reſult was this declaration; *that with the firmeſt and pureſt moral principles, he could obey the eſtabliſhed cuſtoms and laws of the land, and aſſiſt in promoting the public happineſs, with leſs expence to his integrity, and leſs pain to his mind, than he could keep together, and conduct the ſmalleſt community, formed nearly on his own principles.*

But it may be ſaid, how are *beneficial revolutions* to take place, if every man is to ſubmit to the laws? You will obſerve, I do not controvert the right of private judgment. My poſition is, *that private opinion, like private liberty, cannot always be acted upon, and muſt be given up in part, to public convenience.* I would ſubmit, when I could not help it, to the laws of a ſtate which I did not approve; and if a revolution aroſe, as at the Reformation, and introduced principles more agreeable to me, I

ſhould

ſhould rejoice in it. But I would not project a reformation; becauſe I think it above any man's abilities and influence; and no reformation or revolution was ever brought about by one man. There are millions of *Calvins*, and *Luthers*, and *Cromwells*. It is the event produces the man; and not the man the event. Human affairs are in a conſtant fluctuation; and they are very little retarded, or haſtened, in their changes, by the conduct of any individuals. Some men muſt take the lead in every great tranſaction, when all circumſtances have made it ready for execution; and thoſe men may have the glory or diſhonour of it; while the various reaſons, and cauſes which have effected it, are unknown, and incomprehenſible to the world. I have therefore thought that men have been impelled to *create* great events and revolutions in kingdoms, by the ſame kind of folly as would tempt a man to interrupt the courſe of Nature, or diſappoint the views of Providence.---I beg I may not be miſunderſtood

ſtood, as meaning to caſt any illiberal reflections on thoſe who have lately diſtinguiſhed themſelves as *reformers in the church.* I greatly honour the characters of many of them; at the ſame time, I think them clearly miſtaken in their duties. The principles of the people of England are in general thoſe of the Thirty Nine articles. While that is the caſe, it is folly to think of an alteration: when it is not, an alteration will take place of courſe, as at the Reformation. Let them by their eloquence convert the people to Arminianiſm or Arianiſm, or any other ſet of principles, and the government will of courſe eſtabliſh thoſe principles. In the mean time, I would aſſure them of one thing, if it were neceſſary to many of them, that they can have nothing to fear in their preſent ſituations, from the opinion of the candid and conſiderate, or from a good and merciful God.

My

My principal objects at this time, are not any religious divisions; but thoſe unhappy political ones, which threaten ſuch fatal conſequences to the proſperity and peace of the public.

My time will not, if my abilities did, allow of a thorough diſcuſſion of the important queſtion between Great Britain and America. There ſeems to have been material errors committed on the firſt ſettlement of our colonies, if they were meant to be continued in a ſtate of dependence on the mother-country. The firſt ſettlers fled this country, becauſe they diſliked its conſtitution, and could not ſubmit to its laws. They were allowed charters, and left to model their own laws, provided they were not inconſiſtent with the fundamental laws of England. Thus ſeveral diſtinct bodies and ſtates were formed; which would grow more and more diſſimilar, as their ſtrength increaſed. As their connections with each other

were

were various; and a power became neceſſary ſomewhere, to regulate their intereſts, and decide their diſputes: the legiſlature of Great Britain *aſſumed* that power; and *was ſubmitted to in the moſt important laws that can affect the commerce and property of the Americans.* The Americans made no objection, and the *crown* made none; which in fact was incroached upon by this ſtep of the parliament. The crown has of late been happily worn by princes, who make no difficulties in ſacrificing *meer prerogative* to the proſperity and happineſs of the people. The firſt material ground of conteſt was the ſtamp act; and the reaſons of that celebrated law are variouſly related. The Americans object to it, as an encroachment on charters, and an invaſion of their rights; and ſay there were no good reaſons for paſſing it. The friends of government here ſay, that the exerciſe of the powers inſiſted upon in it, is neceſſary to the government of the ſtate; which would immediately become an abſolute monarchy, *if powerful ſtates were continued as chartered go-*

vernments by the will of the King. I am well informed, there were ſome ſtaunch republicans who had a principal hand in forming the project of taxing America, in almoſt all caſes, in the Britiſh parliament. And it has been mentioned, in honour to the moderation and goodneſs of the preſent King, that though he was told, the meaſure would leſſen the power of the crown, he made no difficulty to acquieſce in it. There was ſomething plauſible in the reaſons then alledged, that a future King having many independent parliaments might play them againſt each other, till he had weakened and deſtroyed them. This argument has been lately revived; and exemplified by the fate of the French and Spaniſh monarchies; which were formerly divided into ſeveral principalities or ſtates.

The Americans, on the contrary, ſaw in the deſign of taxing them, only an expedient of adminiſtration, to increaſe the influence of the crown, by increaſing the number of places and penſions; and they

they have reſiſted on pretenſions of liberty, which concerned the whole empire. They ſay, that no examples in hiſtory can be applied to the preſent caſe; as there never has been an inſtance where an empire, of vaſt extent, roſe on the principles of liberty, had all its bleſſings almoſt equally diffuſed, and all its people equally happy. That it is cruel to cut them off from the bleſſings of Engliſhmen, under pretence of providing for a ſecurity and glory, which can ariſe only from the proſperity and happineſs of the whole people. They ſay further, that the Britiſh conſtitution is deſtroyed in England, by bribery and a ſtanding army; and that if thoſe evils are introduced in America, the whole empire muſt ſoon become enſlaved.

The queſtion ſtood in this manner, as far as I comprehended it, when the deſign was reſumed by the preſent adminiſtration, upon the principle of expedience; as they alledged, that the expences neceſſary for the

defence and credit of the commonwealth, could not be defrayed, without a power lodged in ſome body to exact them from every part of it. The hiſtory of the meaſures taken by the miniſtry, and the oppoſitions made by the Americans, is too well known to need recital. Different opinions produced ſtratagems;* ſtratagems injuries; and injuries a general war. As men of enlarged views, and friends to the intereſts of mankind, we muſt be deeply affected by conſidering this melancholy event. Men quarrel, in almoſt all caſes, for purpoſes which they never accompliſh. The nature of human governments will not admit of a virtuous adminiſtration. Wiſe and good men in America, as in England in the reign of Charles the Firſt, might have reaſons for blame and complaint; but the event will probably ſhew them, that while a *Franklin*, or a *Waſhington*, may

* The tranſaction relating to the tea at Boſton, was a ſtratagem on both ſides.

may be as well-intentioned as a *Hampden*, or a *Fairfax*; yet it is a ----, or a ----, who will run away with the fruits of their labours; heighten their zeal into fury; and play over again the parts of a *Cromwell*, an *Ireton*, *&c.* I would not hold before adminiſtration, the fate of *Charles*, and his adherents; as it was occaſioned principally by a want of ſincerity in his own character. There are abundant reaſons to make them even more cautious than they have been, to avoid thoſe hoſtilities, which may end only with the ruin of the empire.

I mean not to countenance the common cry of diſſatisfaction with public meaſures. The very nature of the Engliſh government is either not underſtood, or there are ſome reaſons which make men pretend not to underſtand it. We ſee in the writings of a Monteſquieu, a Sidney, a Locke, a Blakeſtone, pleaſing deſcriptions of---what has never exiſted. The Engliſh conſtitution, as it is generally

generally deſcribed and declaimed upon, never had an exiſtence. I appeal to every page of hiſtory for the truth of what I ſay; where the moſt ſagacious republican will find it extremely difficult to point out one public meaſure that has been conducted on the boaſted principles of the conſtitution. I have been myſelf happy under the Engliſh government, in the moſt ſplendid period of its liberty and glory. I have attentively obſerved its general movements. They have proceeded from principles, that were not even analagous to thoſe which were ſuppoſed to form the Engliſh Conſtitution. Once in ſeven years, there has been a pretended election; *in which it has been an eſtabliſhed Whig principle, ever ſince the Revolution, that adminiſtration ſhould have a majority.* I do not ſpeak this from a diſlike of Whigs; moſt of whom I ſuppoſe to be among the beſt friends to the liberty of this country. I only mention a truth which is neceſſary to my purpoſe; and I take it even from the patriots.

It

It has been a maxim uncontroverted by them (till they loſt their places) that the buſineſs of government could not go on, unleſs it had a majority at its devotion in both houſes of parliament. It has accordingly ever ſecured that majority; *and all laws have been made, and all buſineſs done, by adminiſtration thus attended.*--- The Engliſh Government, therefore is and has been, as ſimple a monarchy as can be conceived; if we apply the term *monarch* to the *King, his miniſters, and their dependants.* Look into any of the monarchies of Europe, and you will find that the *ſupreme power* is in none of them more ſimple, or conſiſting of fewer parts. The diſtinction of the Engliſh government is, that it rules by *influence* not by *fear*. Other powers effect their purpoſes by an *army of ſoldiers*; the Engliſh ſupreme power *by one of placemen, penſioners, dependants, and expectants.** The ſtate

* I am told there are near forty thouſand people who have places and penſions, and in whom it would not be prudent to diſobey the miniſter.

of

of government being ſuch as I deſcribe it; not ſuch as it is pretended to be, either here or in America, it ſhould ſeem that our diſputes aroſe in the natural and neceſſary meaſures of adminiſtration.

The Engliſh are ruled, and poſſibly can be ruled only in this way. *It is the eſtabliſhed government of our country.* By extending it to the Americans, we offer to them, what they pretend to be deſirous of---*all the rights and privileges of Engliſhmen*; by refuſing the offer, the Americans refuſe to become *fellow-citizens* with us. They will ſay, 'that the conſtitution is altered, and not what it was.'---When, and where?---In the writings of Locke and Sidney.---'But they have formed their own conſtitution on thoſe writings; and they will not adjuſt them to ours, but adhere to thoſe of their own forming.' This ſeems to me to be the real ſtate of the diſpute; and I ſee no poſſibility of deciding

deciding it, unleſs the very governments are altered either here or in the colonies.

It looks now as if both parties were determined to fight their way to an iſſue.---In that caſe all ſpeculation on the general intereſts of a vaſt empire give way to *the morality of a citizen* and the *duty of an Engliſhman.* The firſt law of nature is that of ſelf-preſervation; and that law extends to ſocieties, as well as individuals. What a man might doubt or heſitate upon, in a ſtate of ſecurity, a caſe of neceſſity would make him determine. As a citizen of Rome, I muſt have reſented the injuries of a *Coriolanus*, when unjuſtly accuſed by the people; but I would have put the ſame man to death, when he ſought the ruin of his country. The Americans pleading for their conſtitutions, and the rights ariſing from them; and the Americans in arms, are very different objects. War hardly ever holds out its real purpoſes; never its certain conſequences.

Virtuous as the Americans may be, there are men among them, *who will go to any lengths*; and the ſafety, and the very being of this country, may be more in danger by this war than may be imagined. Who would have thought when *Hannibal* ſet ſail for Spain; that he would ſoon be in Italy ſhaking the Roman empire at its very baſe? And who will ſay, there may not be an Hannibal in America?

What I mean by this is not to depreſs my fellow-ſubjects, but to *unite them*. Opinions, and projects, and cabals, in the true ſpirit of Roman patriotiſm, ſhould now be wholly laid aſide, and when the honour and exiſtence of our country is at ſtake, *let it not be our whole buſineſs to enquire how it became ſo*. War ſhould be avoided, by every poſſible precaution; but when once entered upon, *honour*, *ſecurity*, and the very being of a ſtate may require, that ſome of the principal ends of it ſhould be obtained.

As

As a miniſter of the *Prince of Peace*, I ſhould, however, rejoice to ſee arms thrown aſide, and contending parties embrace as brethren. The firſt ſtep towards an accommodation, would be to to ſacrifice *incendiaries* on both ſides. Let them be ſelected and baniſhed altogether to *Terra del Fuego*, or to *New Zealand*.

Then let ſome *Menenius* be found, who ſhall treat with the Americans on the principles of the following fable.

" In times of old, when all the members " of the body could think for themſelves, and " each of them had a diſtinct will of its own, " they reſolved, with one conſent, to revolt againſt " the belly. They alledged, there could be no " good reaſon, that they ſhould toil from morn- " ing to night, like *hewers of wood and drawers* " *of water*; while the belly, in the mean time, " lay at its eaſe in the midſt of them; and

" ſloth-

" ſlothfully fattened on their labour. They ac-
" cordingly agreed to aſſiſt it no more. The
" feet ſaid, they would carry it no longer; the
" hands, they would feed it no longer; and the
" teeth would not chew a morſel, though it were
" placed between them. They all, for ſome time,
" kept ſtrictly to their reſolution; until they found,
" that inſtead of mortifying the belly, they weakened
" and deſtroyed themſelves; and they perceived
" not, till too late, that it was owing to the
" belly, that they had *power to ſtarve him*, or
" *ſpirit to rebel againſt his authority*."

FINIS.